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Keen on travel and outward-looking



RUDOLF WYDER:
"Globale Schweiz:
Die Entdeckung der
Auslandschweizer",
Stämpfli Verlag,
Berne 2016,
256 pages, CHF 34

Migration and mobility are the predominant issues of the present day. Tens of thousands of Swiss leave their native country every year and around the same number return. The Swiss are amongst "the keenest travellers in the modern day", according to Rudolf Wyder in the foreword of his book "Globale Schweiz: Die Entdeckung der Auslandschweizer" (Global Switzerland – the Discovery of the Swiss Abroad). It was not so long ago that the state was pleased to see as many people as possible leave and never return. Government promotion of emigration was still being used as a means of combating unemployment in the 1930s.

Wyder explores this and many other fascinating facets of Switzerland's relationship with its diaspora in his book published to mark the centenary of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). It does not focus on emigrants' adventures. The author, who was the Director of the OSA from 1987 to 2013, writes history in a traditional fashion, adopting a chronological and thematic approach.

It is the first time the political preferences of expats have been documented in such depth based on representative surveys and analysis of voting patterns at elections and referenda. "Their greater receptiveness to specific foreign policy issues and proposals concerning the role and image of Switzerland in the world" is clearly evident, according to Wyder. For example, the approval of the first package of sectoral agreements with the EU in 2000 and of accession to the Schengen and Dublin agreements in 2005 was well above the average. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that "the initiative against mass immigration in 2014 was rejected by the Swiss Abroad with two thirds voting against it on average in all eight cantons that disclose how they voted". Voters abroad vote in favour to a much greater extent than the Swiss average on issues concerning Switzerland's openness and international commitment. What is more, "parties favouring international presence and participation fare better amongst the Swiss Abroad at elections. Voting patterns amongst citizens abroad at elections and referenda are almost completely in line with those of urban areas in Switzerland," writes the author.

Rudolf Wyder has written a standard reference work on Swiss emigration history and has raised awareness about the great importance of Swiss emigration during the 20th and at the start of the 21st century.

JÜRGEN MÜLLER

Reflections of a family man



ADRIAN STERN:
"Chumm mir singed
die Songs wo mir
liebed und tanzed mit
ihne dur d'Nacht",
Sony Music, 2016.

Adrian Stern has always seemed like a carefree youngster going through life with a smile on his face. Someone who is so endearing that you forgive him his confirmed naivety. The singer is now 41 but somehow still looks like the young man with the friendly smile of yesteryear. His lyrics nevertheless reveal the reflections of a family man slowly ageing.

The long title of Adrian Stern's new album is "Chumm mir singed die Songs wo mir liebed und tanzed mit ihne dur d'Nacht" – but its tracks are not mainly about dancing the night away to your favourite music but instead responsibility, partnership, doubt, getting older and the hints of a first midlife crisis.

Thirteen years ago on his debut album "Stern", the artist from Baden sang frothy love songs. Later, his fourth album "Herz", which achieved double platinum status, featured the typical wanderlust songs of a not-quite-so-young man still wishing to explore the world.

Adrian Stern then started a family and began writing more serious songs in 2013 on his album "1+1". This suited the performer who sings in dialect. It is therefore pleasing to see that he has maintained his approach to lyrics on his latest album. The twelve tracks on "Chumm mir singed..." show genuine maturity and the reflections of a music-writing 40-something father of two: In "Älter" the singer questions whether he can live up to his role in life and if all his efforts make any sense. In "Irgendwie" he sings about the oppressive insecurity he feels when his relationship changes over the course of time and with the arrival of children. He also explores other themes, such as his love of his home town of Baden expressed in beautiful lyrics in "Chlini Stadt und wildi Ross".

Musically, Adrian Stern sticks with the catchy, melodious pop music of his recent albums, which is sung in dialect and supported by an acoustic guitar. The sound is nevertheless electronically enhanced here. This lends an interesting dash of colour to the mature songs of the artist who was once a young gun.

MARKO LEHTINEN